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# Intelligence on Africa

In the debate on the playing fields of Congress over the Carter Administration's assertion that Cuba bore responsibility for the rebel invasion of Zaire last month, the score is now even. That much is clear. What is not so clear, however, is the object of the game — its true value in aiding the United States in setting its African policy.

The contest was inaugurated May 25 when President Carter, speaking in Chicago, asserted that Angola, the staging ground for the rebel raid, had a role in the invasion and that Cuba, which has a substantial military presence in Angola, "shared" that responsibility. Fidel Castro denied the assertion and his denial drew the interest of members of Congress. To support the Administration charge, CIA Director Stansfield Turner appeared before two congressional committees to outline the intelligence information on which it was based.

Early last week, Rep. Edward Boland of Springfield, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said that on the basis of the Turner testimony his committee was "satisfied" that the President's charge of Cuban responsibility for the Katangan invasion was correct. Late last week, however, Sen. John Sparkman and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which he chairs, said Turner had failed to produce conclusive evidence of Cuban responsibility.

Then over the weekend it was revealed that shortly after the invasion Castro had told US officials

he had attempted to head off the invasion. Taken at face value, the Castro assertion would seem to contradict the thrust of Carter's remarks. On the other hand the Castro statement is a clear admission that at least he had advance word of the invasion. Some senators suggested the most significant aspect of the Castro communication was that it had not been revealed to Congress.

In its way the debate over the CIA intelligence is an interesting exercise. CIA Director Turner's admonition that such intelligence rarely takes on the irrefutable quality of courtroom evidence deserves a place in any ensuing debate.

Yet there are substantial dangers to the whole affair. By focusing on the degree of reliability of CIA information on Cuban involvement in Zaire — a focus which raises the larger questions of the Cuban and Russian roles elsewhere in Africa — there is a very real danger that US African policy will come to be drawn solely in East-West terms. This would be a sharp and regrettable departure from the earlier Administration inclination to leave African problems to the Africans, with the United States playing a subordinate role where it could — in Rhodesia and South Africa — for instance.

If the Administration chooses to view the formulation of its African policy primarily from an East-West perspective, it runs the risk of needlessly endangering crucial big power agreements, such as a new SALT treaty, and of inflating the United States' true interests in and influence over events in Africa.